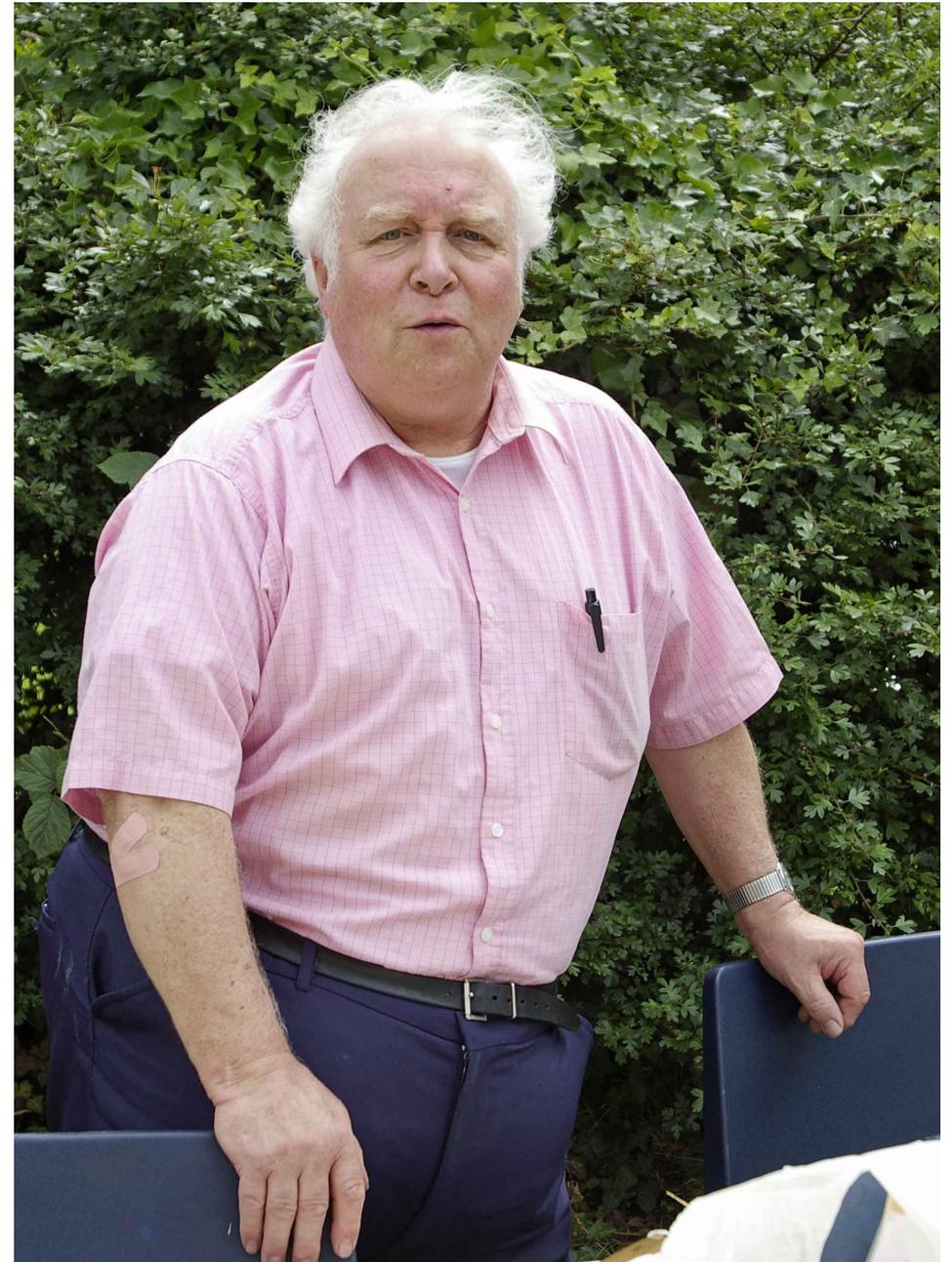


Bobby Turner
1934—2013

A Life Celebrated



A Person for the Village to Celebrate



Giving thanks for Bobby

We are at the end of an era in the village. It is hard to imagine Riding Mill without Bobby sitting at the heart of it. He has made a difference to so many of us by kindness, good advice, being there, putting us in touch with one another, providing all kinds of service and ways to bring people together. He has made a difference to us, not only individually but as a community.

It isn't often in a lifetime you meet a person who has such an influence for good and who makes a community. It is not surprising that Bobby was a man of deep faith, 'rooted and grounded' in the love of Christ. We talked often together about how that faith works out in all the ordinary things and, latterly, how it sustains you in preparing for death and getting ready for glory. Bobby was a great one for the faith being for everyone; he shared it, sang it, and lived it. We are the richer for knowing him and in him catching sight of the love of God.

I wonder what Bobby would make of all this? I am sure he would be overwhelmed to discover what we think of him, how much he is respected and loved. I am confident that what he would hope of us is that we would all do all that we can, in our own way, to make each other's lives fuller and better, and this place a good one. We won't read about it in the papers but we will see it in our lives, and that will be the real and lasting tribute to Bobby.

Alison White

Priest in Charge St James' Riding Mill



International Relations

Bobby not only enquired about new residents coming to the village he also welcomed visitors.

On one of our New Zealand trips our house was occupied by New Zealand friends in our absence. They called at Bobby's to pick up milk etc. Bobby immediately enquired as to whether they were passing through or visiting. When they said they were going to be staying in the village for a while he asked who they were staying with. Knowing that we were away he contacted several of our neighbours and by the time they drove from the shop to our home the neighbours were out to welcome them.

What a boost that is to International Relationships. Thank you Bobby for your thoughtfulness.

The Redfearns.

Memories of Bobby

What do you do with a small child on a dismal, wet morning? Go to Bobby's shop. It was Nicholas' first visit. He handed over his 10p (I had forgotten about inflation), and stood in wonder as Bobby guided his choice. Sweet after sweet dropped into the bag and Nicholas left the shop in a state of bliss, clutching his treasure.

A long time ago his mother, probably 10 or 11 years old, had gone to the shop for the same purpose. She was greeted across the counter by a beaming Bobby who recalled the comedy catch-phrase, "And what's your name, little girl?" It was Jennifer, of course. The joke has been repeated over the years, and has been a source of much fun for all of us. Not so for the young Jennifer. She was seriously displeased. Inevitably, that displeasure was a spur for Bobby's mirth. How he enjoyed the tease! He was a lovely man, and we shall miss him.

Janet Goddard

I was saddened to hear of Bobby's sudden passing away, like a part of my childhood had been taken away.

Delivering the papers around the whole of the village for many years in the 70's was a real pleasure. No matter what the weather, there was always time, an encouraging word and a joke.

A real influence in my formative years and in recent years, my children have always wanted to come to the shop to say hello too. A testament to your enduring character.

Thanks for all the happy times, with fond memories from your "best paperboy"

David Lawrence

Waiting for his door to open on a cold morning so as to collect the papers for my paper round.

Nipping down to Bobby's for "sweets for the journey" before going on holiday. My children now doing the same. Not forgetting a quarter of midget gems for dad!

Bobby always remembering my birthday as it was the same as his mum's - December 13th.

His warm smile and lovely voice, both to chat to and to hear singing. The somewhat reliable chaos of the shop!

"Bobby's" just being there. The centre of the village in so many ways...

Kathryn Shuttleworth (Lawrence)

Bobby, Frank and their mother 1978



A Shopkeeper's Life

One day a lady in Bobby's shop handed him a packet of biscuits, saying, "Bobby, these are out of date". "Oh, just pass them over", said Bobby "they'll do for our cup of tea." "But Bobby" the lady continued, "I bought a packet of these last week, so they would be out of date too." "Well," said Bobby, "just bring them back and I'll replace them." "But I've eaten them" said she. "Then I'd rather you didn't bring them back" replied Bobby.

A customer, noticing some bananas beginning to turn brown, said to Bobby "These bananas look a bit sad, I'll just take them home with me," and she put them in her basket and went out. No money was offered!

A villager telephoned our Bobby one afternoon and asked, "Could you call around with half-a-dozen eggs when you close the shop?" "Yes, of course," said Bobby. "Oh good," said the customer, "Robbs have just delivered my grocery order and they have forgotten the eggs." As Bobby said to me, "I wish she hadn't added the last bit!"

Ever willing was Bobby. He will be missed by us all.

Alan Armstrong

Bobby Turner

As a small, fair, curly-headed four year old, Bobby was first introduced to Riding Mill in 1938 when he accompanied his father, Thomas, as he delivered the Sunday newspapers to households in the village.

Riding Mill then was about a quarter of the size that it is today, and Bobby has watched green meadows disappear to make way for housing to accommodate the expanding population over the years.

He was born at West Mickley being 'the second son of Thomas and Eleanor Turner' and had two brothers, Ted and Frank. He was educated at Mickley, and St Matthew R.C. School in Prudhoe. After leaving school, Bobby was employed by a clothing firm in Newcastle until he was drafted into the army to do National Service duty. On his return to 'Civvie Street' he resumed his former trade but this time in Prudhoe.

Tragically, Bobby's father was killed in a road accident a while after he returned home from serving in the forces, and the family continued to deliver the Sunday papers here.

In 1968 the opportunity arose whereby the family was able to take over the daily newspaper business in the village. Bobby used to recall waiting patiently with his mother for the 6am train to arrive at the station from Newcastle on the bitterly cold, frosty January morning on the day they started. They eventually had a small wooden hut for shelter at the station until a larger wooden building was erected on land near The Wellington on the approach to the station from the Main Road.

Later, when the West Wylam and Prudhoe Co-operative Society ceased trading in the village, the family purchased the property and Riding Mill became their home.

Bobby was a devout Christian all his life and worshipped at St Elizabeth Church at Minsteracres for many years and more recently, attended St Mary Vigil Mass which is held in Corbridge.

As a founder member of Riding Mill Churches Together he was instrumental in introducing the Walk of Witness and the carol singing in front of the shop into their yearly programmes. Having a beautiful tenor voice it was only natural for him to join the local choral society deriving great pleasure from singing in the various concerts. Many will remember the Drama Club production of 'Oh! What a Lovely War' in which Bobby played a part and his faithful attendance at other plays and many other functions.

For many years Bobby has been a hard-working Trustee of the Riding Mill Village Hall. He was given a collection of photographs taken by the late Marion Cooke and for a while no inspiration sprang to mind for their use. That is until the 25th Anniversary of the bypass of the notorious Whiteside Bank which ran through the centre of the village. Here was the use which had been waited for!



Bobby Turner was not just our friendly local shopkeeper and font of all knowledge! Behind the scenes his influence was significant: he persuaded the reluctant to take a more active part in village life; he encouraged the development of new ideas; and helped in every way he could.

My spell as Chair of the Village Hall Trust saw him present at every meeting with much to contribute. It was his push for the modernisation of the Parish Hall and the formation of the Development Committee that helped create the Hall as it is today.

We shall miss him sorely.

His memory is best served by keeping that community spirit thriving!

Pam Niven (ex Chair of RMVHT)

Email from Kent

About two or three years ago there was a service in St James which was ecumenical and I think called Favourite Hymns or Songs of Praise, and possibly part of a village event. Whatever, one of the hymns contributed was by Bobby and I think he sang it himself. It was from a favourite hymnbook of his and if I remember correctly may have been called Day by Day.

Bobby introduced it as the hymn by which he lived his life and each verse said something about Christian living and how each day he tried to live up to the tenets expressed.

When I learned of his death and was thinking about him, I felt he had witnessed so truly and faithfully his Christian faith, that the words of the hymn would make a fitting tribute to him.

He will be so sadly missed in the village as he really was the 'heart' of Riding Mill.

Wendy Stevenson

This is the hymn that Wendy mentions

Just for today

*Lord for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray;
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin Just for today.*

*Let me do faithfully Thy work, and duly pray;
Let me be kind in word and deed, Just for today.*

*Let me no wrong or idle word, Unthinking say;
Set Thou a seal upon my lips Just for today.*

*So for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray;
But keep me, guide me, hold me, Lord Just for today*

We have only lived in Riding Mill a little while, but Bobby was so kind and patient with us all when the grandchildren trooped in to choose their 10p bags of sweets – and he remembered their names too, amazing!

Norman Estyn-Jones

A small committee of seven was formed which included David Harle, John Bradshaw and George Proud who were skilled with computers and photography which resulted in the Photographic Exhibition showing Riding Mill over the years. This was a great success both financially and socially and the proceeds were given to the Village Hall Trust to kick-start the fund-raising needed to comply with the requirements of the Disability Act. One thing led to another and the task of raising funds to develop the Parish Hall was born. It took five long years and a successful 'Big Lottery' bid to reach the sum required to modernise the hall and produce the building we all enjoy.

For many years Bobby agreed that the shop could be used as a collecting point for medicinal requirements by patients who attend the Corbridge surgery – a service greatly appreciated.

Blessed with the gift of communication skills, Bobby was able to converse easily with people of all ages, from wee toddlers to teenagers and adults. His patience helping the very young select their 10p worth of sweets was endless, giving them confidence which lasted them through their teenage years and into adulthood. His friendly and caring hand was always outstretched to the elderly and was evident judging by the number of keys he held so that he could come to their assistance both day and night.

Bobby gave generously to local and national charities as well as the work of Father Palatti with the poor in India. Customers also helped to raise the money sent to this worthwhile cause by giving their loose change.

One of Bobby's pleasures in the autumn/winter months was to attend Stocksfield Local History Society meetings to listen to the excellent lectures about times past in our area.

The community of Riding Mill was delighted to arrange a two-day Christmas break for Bobby and Frank to celebrate Bobby's 70th birthday at an hotel in Gatehouse of Fleet. The special treat for Bobby alone was a day air-trip to the Vatican in Rome to witness the newly elected Pope's first public mass. David Kilner acted as his escort on this memorable journey. The volume of air traffic from all over the world was immense which resulted in our two travellers make a three hour bus journey across Northern Italy to catch the return flight arriving back in Riding Mill after W H Smith had delivered the morning papers at about 5am.

Bobby's work in the community has been recognised twice – firstly, H M the Queen awarded him the B.E.M. which was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Ridley, at a ceremony held in County Hall, Morpeth. Secondly, the Hexham Rotary Club presented him with a Paul Harris Fellowship in 2007.

The Rotarian motto "Service before Self" aptly describes Bobby's much valued contribution to the life of the community of Riding Mill.

May he now rest in peace.

Myra Dixon

From Linda Shepherd and the exercise class

Everyone knows about Bobby's generosity, kindness and love of anything to do with Riding Mill.

But only the 'Friday Exercise Class Ladies' know of his love for his VEST.

Almost every time we did the exercise with a sideways stretch, we were told in graphic detail of the movement of Bobby's vest and how glad he was that it was well tucked in. We responded with shrieks of 'too much information', which of course he loved.

We were told that he and his vest were never parted even when he did National Service! (was it obligatory not to wear a vest?)

We also trusted that he did have several vests! Of course he didn't mention his underwear - we did - so it was a weekly bulletin, one way or another.

VESTS for ever Bobby!

With huge affection and much love from us all.

Linda Shepherd

Mingling at Village Day



Bobby was a devout Catholic and was an active member of each Parish in which he lived. He was a founder member of St Mary's choir and when he began to attend Saturday evening Mass in Corbridge he led the singing initially with Renee Shill but latterly he took responsibility for selecting the music.

When I moved to Riding Mill in 1994 Bobby found out I was a Catholic. (I think Marion Cooke must have told him.) He went out of his way to tell me about Mass times in both Hexham and Minsteracres and even offered me a lift to Corbridge on Saturday evenings.

Berni Walker

Choral Enthusiast

When we first arrived in Riding Mill some 13 years ago, I was a little concerned that it would be difficult to fit into village life. One of my first ports of call was to the shop to order our newspapers and Bobby starting chatting. He soon asked me if I played tennis and told me that there was an excellent club I could join if I so wished. He chatted a bit more and then asked me if I liked singing – that did the trick and he introduced me to the Choral Society the following week. It was only in retrospect that I realised what he was doing – he was integrating a newcomer to be part of his special village with his own special charm. What a man – what a miss.

Janet Proud

Early Encounters

Ann Fenwick remembers Bobby's shop as the heart of the village as when they first came to Riding Mill their cat went missing and Ann spent hours going round the village trying to find it. She then thought she'd pop into the newsagent to tell them, whereupon Bobby told her not to worry someone would find it and let him know. Sure enough the Andersens found it in their garage and told Bobby, who told Ann and she has never forgotten!

She also recalled Bobby coming of age for his pension and all the shenanigans that went on with dozens of balloons around the front of the shop and a red carpet along the path to the Post Office which Pam Armstrong instigated!

Oh What a Lovely War!

I have many happy memories of the time Bobby joined the Drama Club to be part of 'Oh What a Lovely War' some 30 years or so ago.

Rehearsals were fun and going quite well, except on one occasion there was a tricky scene which we just couldn't get right - we were running out of timeand Bobby, being Bobby didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings regarding the directing of the play but these things had to be addressed!

To solve the problem, one Sunday morning he summoned some of us to the shop where we all secretly rehearsed songs and marching until all was in order.....the marching needed to be just right but we didn't have any guns - however, we needn't have worried, for once again, Bobby rescued us and armed everyone with a 'standard issue' of 'French Sticks' ...what happened to the French Sticks is anyone's guess but in his kindly way the marching was duly sorted!!!

Celia Bridges



"I watch the sunrise"

Bobby was the person who greeted you when you moved to the village, who made you feel welcome, who always talked to the children. He was the true community person.

Bobby was the man who took the small pieces of change from customers who said "put it in your charity box, Bobby" and Bobby added it to the money he sent to a priest working with poor children in India.

Like many who live in Riding Mill, I spent happy moments discussing with Bobby what was in the papers, and what were up and coming events in the village. If you were worried about someone and were going away, it was Bobby you asked to keep an eye out for that person.

Bobby had an amazing depth and breadth to his being... he was such a deeply spiritual person. Never afraid to make reverence to his Christian faith, Bobby's was a truly ecumenical belief. He would share prayers and hymns and make suggestions for every spiritual occasion.

When my father died (whom Bobby had met on my parents' visits to Riding Mill) I was helping to plan the Catholic funeral. I asked Bobby if I could borrow his Celebration Hymnal and had he any suggestions for hymns? He immediately came up with "*I watch the sunrise*" sometimes known as "*Close to You*".

It was the perfect choice for Dad's service and now I remember it as we grieve Bobby's passing from us and celebrate his walking with the Lord he loved.

*I watch the moonlight guarding the night,
Waiting till morning comes.
The air is silent, earth is at rest
Only your peace is near me.
Yes, you are always close to me
Following all my ways.
May I be always close to you
Following all your ways, Lord.*

Thank you, Bobby, for all you gave us.

Jenny Mathers

That was the day that was!

Bobby's Day Trip to Rome

In October 2004 Bobby celebrated his 70th birthday and the village contributed to a fund to mark the event. The monies raised enabled Bobby and Frank to spend Christmas and Boxing Day in 2004 with friends at the 'Cally Palace' Hotel in Gatehouse-of-Fleet – two days when there would be no newspapers to worry about.

However, there were still funds remaining and I enquired in January 2005 whether Bobby had ever been to Rome and the Vatican City. So when he told me that he had tried to go in his youth but was thwarted because the coach in which he was travelling encountered a road accident which prevented him from reaching the destination, I suggested if he wished, that I would accompany him to Rome, as I knew there was a day trip on 25 April 2005.

Bobby was up for it!

The plan was that the shop would shut, as usual, at one o'clock on Saturday. We would travel to Leeds/Bradford Airport in the afternoon, arrive there in time for him to attend Vigil Mass in Otley at 6pm, stay overnight in an airport hotel and then fly to Rome at 7am on Sunday arriving mid-morning, having a coach tour of Rome and then from 1pm onwards spending free time in the city and of course, visiting the Vatican. We would meet the coach at 6.30pm and fly back from Rome airport, arriving back in Leeds/Bradford airport at 9pm and Riding Mill at 11pm. That was the plan.

Saturday's arrangements proceeded normally – Bobby attended the Mass, but as a surprise, as Bobby was an avid fan of Emmerdale, we went to the nearby village of Esholt which was the setting for the TV series. We had a drink in the Woolpack, took his photograph outside, and then returned to the hotel for a light meal and an early night for the following day.

Sunday did not go to plan! On 25 April, Pope Benedict was celebrating his first Public Mass in St Peter's Square, and it would seem that the whole world was invited! We set off on time but were delayed on landing in Rome because of the increased amount of air traffic; then we were further delayed after landing to await a plane from Exeter with passengers joining our party. Finally, we all met up, joined the coach and drove towards Rome passing the Colosseum and

The final stage of my relationship with Bobby came after my retirement. ¹³ Perceiving that I now didn't have to go to work every day, he determined that what I needed was a job and somehow by a special process known only to him I was co-opted onto a committee and set the task of redeveloping the village hall. He also decided that I was to be the chairman. I don't recall anyone else on the committee having a say in that decision anyway. I think many other people who have been manipulated into volunteering for a wide variety of tasks in the village will recognise the subtle process of being "Bobbied" into things!

I was soon to discover, working with him on that committee, just how effective he was and what a master of the dark art of leadership from behind he really was. To this day I am not at all sure how he did it, which is a tribute to his consummate skill.

In truth Bobby was always looking for the best result for the village and the community he loved and served and always used his personality and influence for the good of others and to the benefit of the people of the village. In this he was unique in my experience, always putting the good of the community before any personal gain or ever seeking any glory for himself.

He was honoured by others, as his British Empire Medal and Paul Harris Fellowship Award amply testify, but although he was delighted with these honours, his motivation came from his deep Christian faith and from inside his own very special personality.

Inevitably, we all have to face the end of life somehow and it came as no surprise to find that Bobby faced it with courage and acceptance and even at times with a bit of dark humour. I think he knew he had done his best, he had kept his shop going to the very end and served his customers and his community to the very last day he could actually stand up long enough to get into his chair behind that counter where we all remember him so well.

The organisation of his funeral service was his last act and so typifies the man. He had the service in St James Church in the heart of the village he loved, it was conducted by both Catholic and Anglican clergy and the organ was played by his friend David Kilner who in Bobby's mind represented the Methodists.

So even in death he was leading us all from behind and telling us the real message of his life, telling us very clearly that we should all work together across religious and political divides if we are to achieve good and happy communities. What a wonderful message and what a brilliant way to demonstrate it.

These are just a few of my own reflections on the unique and inspirational man and very special friend, who was Bobby Turner. I feel sure many of you will have similar stories and feelings to share. I have been privileged to be asked to write down my thoughts and hope they will find many echoes in the hearts of my fellow villagers.

David Harle

Bobby Turner
A Personal Tribute

1972 was an important year in my life. It was the year I got married, the year I became a partner in the Corbridge Medical Practice and the year I discovered Riding Mill and met Bobby Turner.

In those days the Corbridge Practice divided the huge rural area we covered into visiting zones, I was told that my zone was to be Riding Mill and Healey and so every day I did my visits in Corbridge and then went to Riding Mill.

Something struck me at once about Riding Mill and that was the level of neighbourliness and community spirit which was far more intimate and caring than in the bigger village of Corbridge. And they had Bobby Turner.

As a rookie GP I had a lot to learn and I instantly recognised that Bobby was someone who knew a lot about his customers and even more about the whole village, a first impression that proved to be only too accurate. In fact what Bobby didn't know about the village and its inhabitants wasn't worth knowing.

I imagine I first went in to the shop, as so many people must have done over the years, to ask directions. I have a feeling it was to Beauclerc or somewhere just out of the village. Bobby was standing leaning on his counter and chatting to someone before he turned his attention to me almost at once. "It's Doctor Harle the new doctor isn't it?" he asked. How he knew I had no idea, I had barely been in post for a week. I was to learn over the years that Bobby knew everything about Riding Mill, sometimes even before it happened.

It was clear from the directions offered and some background information delivered sotto voce, as he bustled me outside where he couldn't be overheard, that here was a valuable source of information to be cultivated. And so it came to pass that over the years we built up a close friendship and rapport as we both had the interests of the people of our village very much at heart.

The next phase in our relationship came when we moved to the village in 1976. I had been sure that Riding Mill was where I wanted to live and fortunately my wife Jane thought it was a good choice too; she probably had her eye on the school already even though our eldest was only two at the time. Like so many mums before and since, she found Bobby's shop invaluable for all those little items that she needed from day to day, as well as for getting her daily Journal delivered and having a chat with Frank if he happened to be there about Newcastle's prospects in their next match.

Then the children grew old enough to discover the delights of Bobby's shop. Again like so many other kids over the generations they enjoyed spending their sweet money at Bobby's, indeed I think John, my youngest was still getting his sweets and crisps there until he left Riding Mill about three years ago, aged thirty!

stopping at the Trevi fountain. There was then a walk round the various major buildings and sites in the centre of Rome which I am sure Bobby found quite tiring. However, he manfully joined in, but when we arrived at Palazza Navona to commence our free time we found a horse-drawn taxi and we were driven to the Vatican City in style. What a splendid way to enter St Peter's Square.

It was now early afternoon – the mass had ended but St Peter's Square was filled with people and empty chairs. Queues for the Sistine Chapel were long with all the visitors but Bobby decided he was quite content to sit and savour the time in St Peter's square in front of the Basilica. We had coffee while we sat and then after about one and a half hours, after having his photograph taken and a visit to the shops, we got a taxi (driven by an Italian who was anxious to show us that he could drive at 70mph in the crowded streets) back to the Palazzo Navona. After a light snack and a gentle stroll including a visit to one of the many churches bordering the Palazzo, we arrived at 6.30 to await the bus for the airport.

It arrived, amongst much confusion at 7pm. Then we were told that our plane was in Pescara on the east coast of Italy, which was 3 hours away by coach! Apparently, there was so much air-traffic that day in Rome so to avoid congestion and for security reasons with so many VIPs in the city for the Mass, the plane had to be parked elsewhere.

Bobby nevertheless enjoyed the coach journey across Italy, but we arrived in Pescara at 11.30pm only to be told that the pilots had exceeded their flying time so we had to wait until after midnight – in an empty dark airport – until they were allowed to fly again!

It was just before 1am when we eventually set off, landing at Leeds/Bradford airport at 3am and arriving back in Riding Mill at 5.30. The morning papers were awaiting him outside the shop!!

Apparently, in the intercessions in the service that morning, prayers were said for the 'safe return of Bobby'. These were answered!

It was a great privilege and pleasure for me to be with Bobby and I am pleased that although he must have been extremely tired at the end, he enjoyed the visit and the experience.

David Kilner

St Peter's Square,
Rome on Bobby's
epic day trip



Kindness

When our daughter Rachel was about 7 or 8 years old she asked if I could give her a lift to Bobby's and when we got there she asked me to stay in the car. It was just before my birthday and I knew she had about 70p so I sat and waited and wondered what she might be buying! I waited and waited and after about 20 minutes she emerged with a large carrier bag and an even larger smile on her face.

When the birthday morning arrived I was presented with the most beautifully wrapped gift with ribbon and bows (which would have cost more than the 70p!) and which contained a box of my favourite chocolates Black Magic. She was so excited about it - and so was I!

I called in to see Bobby and asked him what I owed and he just said that the smile and happiness on Rachel's face gave him so much joy that that was enough for him. He would not take a penny.

How much joy and happiness he gave to the Village. A lovely man.

Penny Macloughlin

Riding Mill Choral Society

Bobby was one of the stalwarts of the Society, and must have been the longest serving member of the choir. He served for several years on the committee and was always making suggestions about the music that should be considered for our concerts, and ensuring that it had to be attractive if a good audience was to be expected. Many shop customers heard on a Tuesday morning the music that the choir had been rehearsing the previous night!

Bobby was a tenor and sang exuberantly. Once in rehearsal he was a lone voice when he added an extra Hallelujah in the Hallelujah chorus. Nobody minded! Neither did the other tenors. When Bobby decided the music for the tenors appeared uninteresting, he sang the tune with the sopranos.

He was a faithful member and in latter years, often first at the rehearsal and last to leave when he undertook to open and lock up the Parish Hall.

He really will be missed amongst the choir members.



Bobby and
Geoff Orde
impersonating
Flanagan and
Allen singing
Underneath
the Arches as
part of the VJ
Night in the
Parish Hall in
2009